



 **EPA** The United States Environmental Protection Agency's
Asian American & Pacific Islander

Outreach Strategy



Employment and Professional Advancement

AAPIs remain underrepresented in many professions and job series. EPA is evaluating its diversity profile to determine how to address this issue in its own workplace.

EPA believes that maintaining a diverse workforce is the best way for the Agency to achieve its mission. EPA is committed to hiring and supporting talented and committed professionals who understand the Agency's mission and will work to achieve it.

The Agency has made significant progress in attracting AAPI professionals through a variety of outreach efforts. For example, in recognition of its achievements, EPA received the Federal Asian Pacific American Council's Outstanding Agency of the Year Award in 2000 for nurturing and promoting the AAPI component of its workforce (see page 35).

To continue its progress in developing the AAPI segment of its workforce, EPA has several initiatives under way. For example, the Agency's Senior Environmental Employment (SEE) Program works with the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging, which recruits, screens, hires, and pays workers in EPA Regions 5 and 10. EPA also is strengthening its college recruitment and professional development efforts for AAPIs.

The following articles demonstrate EPA's efforts to nurture the professional development of AAPIs in its workforce.

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Asian Pacific American Organization Honors EPA

In 2000, EPA was one of two agencies to receive the Federal Asian Pacific American Council's (FAPAC's) Outstanding Agency of the Year Award. The award recognizes the work of federal agencies to improve representation, promotion, and recognition of Asian Pacific Americans (APA). For many years, FAPAC has given a similar award to recognize individual contributions to the APA community, but this is the first year an award was presented to honor the management achievements of agencies.

Nominations are reviewed by a FAPAC selection committee that picks one or more winners based on their achievements in workforce diversity. EPA was nominated by the Agency's National Asian Pacific American Council, a group of employees representing the APA special emphasis program.

"In large part, EPA won because the selection committee was very impressed with the AAPI program," said Mike Maroof, FAPAC's chair. "Through this program, the Agency has shown continual improvement in its efforts to recruit and advance APAs." Other EPA efforts that impressed the committee included hiring the first

National Special Emphasis Program manager for AAPI employees and conducting an AAPI quality of work-life survey. FAPAC also chose EPA because of an 83 percent increase in the number of APAs holding higher-level positions at the Agency during a 7-year period.



Source: FAPAC

Mike Maroof, FAPAC chair, presents the Outstanding Agency of the Year Award to EPA. Joan Fidler, director of management operations for EPA's Office of International Activities, accepts the award on the Agency's behalf.

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—Mike Maroof,
FAPAC chair

FAPAC at a Glance...

Founded in 1985, FAPAC is an interagency organization of APA employees representing more than 100 federal agencies and the District of Columbia (DC) government. The council promotes equal opportunity and cultural diversity for APAs and pursues their interests and representation in both the federal and DC governments.



Tapping a Valuable Workforce

There's never been a better time for an older adult who's looking for a full- or part-time job. For the past 2 decades, EPA's Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) program has been working to harness the talent, experience, and skills possessed by individuals 55 years and older to help the Agency efficiently respond to emergency situations and short-term projects.

"More than ever, employers are recognizing the value of older workers of all nationalities," according to Clayton Fong, Executive Director of the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA). "We have positions opening up all the time in the senior employment programs—such as SEE—that we administer, and I don't expect that to change."

SEE functions through a series of grants awarded to six national aging organizations, including NAPCA. Through employment programs, multilingual community forums, and health care education, NAPCA has accumulated more than 20 years of experience helping senior citizens remain productive members of their communities.

Under the SEE program, NAPCA recruits, screens, hires, and pays salaries to the workers in EPA Regions 5 and 10. SEE workers are not federal employees, nor are they employees of the grantee organization, rather they are Enrollees in the SEE program.

SEE Enrollee Receives Award

In 1999, Tseh Lin Tsen, one of NAPCA's SEE Enrollees, received the "Claude D. Pepper Distinguished Service Award" during Chicago's 18th Annual Older Workers Awards ceremony. This award is presented annually to distinguished older workers in the Chicago area, and NAPCA was thrilled to have Tsen chosen as one of six finalists.

Tsen started at NAPCA as a participant in another employment program. He later attended classes at Harold Washington College, earning certifications in Accounting and Computer Information systems and subsequently became involved in EPA's SEE program. According to Project Director Mei Lin, who nominated Tsen for the award, he has helped others with computer technology and played an important role in upgrading the computer system at the EPA Safe Water Drinking Branch.

Hundreds of SEE Enrollees currently work in EPA offices nationwide at part- and full-time assignments, depending on their interests and the needs of the EPA office. Assignments range from clerical and secretarial support to highly technical positions such as chemical engineers, public relations specialists, and environmental investigators.

NAPCA's Region 5 Project Director Mei Lin said the program provides workers with benefits aside from employment. "When you work in the environmental field, you become aware of the environmental issues affecting your area, and you bring this knowledge back and share it with your community," Lin said.



College Relations Program With University of Arizona

Attracting skilled workers from diverse backgrounds is a challenge EPA takes very seriously. For a little more than 10 years, EPA has worked with the University of Arizona, an institution at which 1,800 students are AAPIs, to recruit qualified and culturally diverse people into the Agency's workforce.

EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) works in partnership with the University of Arizona under the College Relations Program, which includes a summer internship program funded through an EPA cooperative agreement. The EPA/University of Arizona internship program is entering its seventh year; EPA has funded internships for 66 undergraduate and graduate students, of which 14 percent have been AAPIs.

Typically, OSWER's interns work in EPA Headquarters and regional hazardous waste management program offices. The internship program provides students with an opportunity to apply their academic skills and knowledge in a professional environment. Students receive academic credit for participating in the program.

EPA Partners with ECO to Encourage Environmental Careers

Although the number of job opportunities in the environmental field is steadily increasing, the workforce still lacks cultural diversity—and AAPIs are among those underrepresented. To address this issue, EPA has partnered with the Environmental Careers Organization (ECO), a national nonprofit educational organization. ECO recently launched its Diversity Initiative, which matches qualified individuals from minority populations with paid environmental internships. Through this effort, ECO has successfully placed interns at organizations across the country, including EPA.

For example, EPA offered a variety of internships through ECO, including positions entailing research, analysis, economics, data sampling and monitoring, marketing, outreach, budget and financing, and database management.

At EPA, interns work in all branches of the Agency and at regional offices nationwide. EPA hopes the internships will encourage students to pursue environmental careers after graduation.

According to Linda Smith at EPA, one of the advantages of the partnership with ECO is that it allows EPA managers to experience working with people of different backgrounds. "I think this is a great program—it's really made a difference in the diversity of ideas and solutions to environmental issues," Smith said.

EPA and ECO are also working together to support professional training for students pursuing advanced degrees in environmentally related fields. Through this effort, students majoring in technical disciplines at minority academic institutions are eligible to receive full tuition, a stipend, and a 12-week internship at organizations such as EPA.



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